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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: VISA WAIVER PROGRAM: ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR TRAVEL
AUTHORIZATION (ESTA) ANNOUNCEMENT AND OUTREACH IN JAPAN

This cable is sensitive but unclassified, not for internet
distribution.

11. SUMMARY: This is an ACTION CABLE, please see PARA 4. On June 3,
DHS Secretary Chertoff introduced the ESTA program. Since then,
post has conducted numerous outreach activities to inform the
Japanese Government and public of this initiative. This cable also
contains information on future outreach plans. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Embassy consular and DHS representatives met with Ministry
of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Director General for Consular Affairs
Tanizaki on June 2 to pre-brief him on the launch of ESTA. Tanizaki
said he generally knew ESTA was coming, but was surprised at the
imminent launch date. He expected Japanese travelers would accept
ESTA, but indicated MOFA's Treaty Bureau would look into the
question of whether ESTA effectively spelled the end of the Visa
Waiver Program (VWP). Embassy representatives emphasized to
Tanizaki that this was not the case and the electronically requested
information would be the same as what travelers now provide on the
I-94W arrival/departure form.

13. (SBU) Embassy consular and DHS representatives delivered the same
message on June 4 to MOFA Consular Affairs Bureau, Foreign National
Affairs Division Director Kazuyoshi Matsunaga. He asked if there
would be an exchange of diplomatic notes as there was at the

inception of the Visa Waiver Pilot Program in 1988. We replied we did not believe a dip note would be necessary as ESTA does not fundamentally change the VWP. He then inquired about the EU's reaction to ESTA and if ESTA could be accessed/data entered from a cell phone. Finally, he asked if the 72 hour before boarding ESTA registration deadline precluded last minute requests or emergency travel. We said we believed ESTA allowed for last minute requests and we were not sure if data entry could be done through a cell phone, but that we would raise these questions with the Department.

¶4. (SBU) Action request: Post requests Department provides answers we can share to MOFA's questions on the EU reaction to ESTA and if ESTA could be accessed/processed via a cell phone.

¶5. (SBU) DHS and Consular representatives also delivered the ESTA message on June 4 to Mr. Kazuhiko Kanazashi, International Tourism Division, Policy Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). MLIT had many of the same questions as posed in the other meetings. Their main concern is how the information would get to the airports and airlines. The DHS representative informed that in addition to the support provided to the carriers through the Carrier Liaison Program, the IAP team at Narita would be conducting briefings on ESTA. The consular representative added that the embassy and consulates would be contacting airport officials in their respective locations.

¶6. Post's efforts to inform the general public include many outreach standards such as sending the press release information to the American Chamber of Commerce, Keidanren, JETRO, APEC, and the Japanese Association of Travel Agents (JATA), sending diplomatic notes containing ESTA information to VWP embassies, putting links to the information on the Mission Japan website, and sending the information to Military Liaison contacts and through our newsletters to American residents in Japan. Beyond this we are in contact with Japan Airlines, All Nippon Airlines, United, Continental and Northwest to place a news article in their in-flight magazines. We are handing out the DHS press release, which we have translated into Japanese to visa applicants and we will be holding a briefing with interested embassy officers so they can answer contacts' questions.

¶7. June 5, the Consul General and DHS Attache held a press conference to brief the press on the salient points of ESTA. Consulates in Japan participated through DVC. The following papers and TV stations were represented at the event: Yomiuri Shimbun, Asaha Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun, Sankei Shimbun, Nikkei Shimbun, Tokyo Shimbun, Fukuoka Nishi Nippon news, Kyodo news, Jiji press, NHK, TV-Asahi, Fuji-TV, TV-Tokyo, TBS, Fukuoka-Asahi Television, Travel Vision, and Stars and Stripes. The CG and DHS Attache emphasized ESTA is not a visa; it will be good for multiple visits over two years; it is free of charge; it allows for applications by third parties; it will be required of every passenger regardless of age; questions will be provided in multiple languages by Oct 15. They explained that the overwhelming number of applicants will receive ESTA approval. The following questions were asked by the attendees at the press event:

-- Will you use the same criteria currently used to authorize entry into the U.S. under ESTA?
-- How does the traveler carry the information regarding ESTA approval? Is it stamped into the passport?
-- How will you maintain the data, and what measures will you employ to make sure no outsiders will use the information?
-- Could you please explain the 72 hour rule?
-- How is the traveler notified of the approval?
-- What are the similarities to the Australian model.
-- Will travelers be unable to board a plane without ESTA as of January 12?
-- Will you work with the carriers to have a system in place so that the carrier can check ESTA at check in?
-- With the Australian system, the airline can ask for authorization at check in. Will yours be the same?
-- Can an I-94 be used instead of ESTA?
-- You said ESTA is valid for 2 years, but if you forget you have it, what happens if you apply again?
-- What kind of effect will ESTA have on travelers from Japan?
-- You said a travel agent could apply. Isn't it a problem for the travel agents to have personal information of the traveler?
-- I don't have a plan to go to the U.S., but could I try ESTA

anyway?

-- If I got ESTA approval but put in the wrong name and DOB and I get to the POE and the inspector sees that the info doesn't match the info in my passport, will my inspection take longer? Will I be taken to secondary?

-- The DHS fact sheet talked about information sharing, including with foreign governments. Do you envision any possible problems?

-- Are you planning to charge for ESTA?

The press briefing resulted in positive, factual reporting.

18. (SBU) Comment: The embassy will continue to aggressively reach out throughout Japan to all stakeholders to minimize the amount of erroneous information on ESTA. In some instances, we envision briefing some of the same parties to answer the many questions that are likely to evolve as January 12 looms closer and closer. We will continue to keep Washington apprised of developments through front channel cables.

SCHIEFFER